

My first conscious remembrance of hearing a Bob Dylan song was in June of 1963, about a month before my twelfth birthday, at a Pete Seeger Concert in Lambertville, New Jersey my parents took me to. Seeger sang a lot of new songs by new songwriters that afternoon, but two songs stuck out: "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" and "Who Killed Davey Moore?" At the end of "Hard Rain," my dad turned to me and asked, "Do you know what that was about?" "The bomb," I replied, but it was a question. I didn't know it at the time, but those two songs were the beginning of something that was going to change and affect my life.

Shortly after that concert, I was sent off to a summer camp in Maryland while my family moved from Philadelphia to a small town in New Jersey near New York City. "Blowin' In the Wind," was a huge hit for Peter, Paul & Mary that summer and I heard it on the radios around the camp, but I had no idea it had anything to do with those songs I'd heard Pete Seeger sing. There was nobody in the camp who seemed to know all that much about music. At the end of the summer, I went to a new home in a new town. My brother Tony came home from the much hipper camp he went to in upstate New York a couple of days later. He'd been playing guitar a couple of years by then and he came home with all these new songs and told me all about this guy named Bob Dylan and how he was real into Woody Guthrie. My parents had Woody Guthrie records and my brother and I were big folk music fans, so I knew what he was talking about. It just so happened that this Bob Dylan guy was going to be on TV the next night on a special on "Freedom Songs." This was right before the March on Washington on 1963 when Dr. King gave his "I have a dream speech." That day my (younger) step-brother came home from his camp and he had presents for me and my brother. The Pete Seeger album *We Shall Overcome* that had "Davey Moore" and "Hard Rain" on it for me and *Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* for my brother. That night I watched the show. I think the Freedom Singers and Odetta were also on it, but it was Dylan who captured me. He was wearing a work shirt that was too big and his jeans were ripped. He sang "Blowin' In The Wind" and "Only A Pawn In Their Game." I'd never seen or heard anything like it. He sounded like an old man, but he had the most sensitive face I'd even seen.

That fall I spent dealing with life in a new town and a new school. I didn't like either of them. I couldn't wait to get out each day and rush home and play *Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. I think my favorites were "Don't Think Twice," "Corrinna Corrinna," "Talkin' World War III" and "I Shall Be Free." At the end of November, a week after the Kennedy assassination, Dylan came to the Mosque Theater in Newark. My parents bought us tickets. It was my first time going to a concert without them. My brother ran into some girls from his camp in the lobby. They were flipping out. They'd arrived early and Dylan had walked by them right through the lobby on his way into the theater. They were screaming and stuff. My first exposure to pop hysteria.

Our seats were in the balcony, but during the second half we snuck down to the sixth row. There weren't many people there. We probably could've gotten closer, but we were scared of getting discovered in the wrong seats. I don't remember all that much about the show, except that he was really funny. He opened with "Times They Are A-Changin'" and did a lot of songs that weren't on *Freewheelin'*, like "Talkin John Birch" and "Walls of

Redwing." He introduced Blowin' In the Wind, saying "Here's the song Newsweek said I didn't write." I'm pretty sure the encore was "With God On Our Side." "Walls of Redwing" stuck in my mind. I had no idea I wouldn't hear it again for ten years or so. In those days the best source of information on Dylan was Sing Out! Magazine which my brother and I subscribed to. I savored every picture and every mention.

That January I walked into the record store in my town and there was a new Bob Dylan album, The Times They Are A-Changin'. My first impulse buy! If anything else got on the turntable the next few months I don't remember it. And the fourth verse, my parents never heard the end of that. Every argument, every comment was met with "Don't Criticize What You Can't Understand." There was a folk show on every night on WJRZ called the Jerry White Show, and my brother and I listened religiously in hopes of hearing Dylan news. But Dylan didn't perform much in those days. It was past the days of the Gaslight and Folk City, so Times had to do. I must've played "Hattie Carroll" a thousand times. I thought the harp solo after the third verse was the saddest thing I'd ever heard.

At the end of that summer another Dylan album suddenly appeared: Another Side of Bob Dylan. It had no political songs. I didn't know what to think at first. Almost immediately there was an article in Sing Out!, an "Open Letter to Bob Dylan," by the editor of Sing Out!, Irwin Silber criticizing Dylan for abandoning protest. I didn't know what to think about that either. But I knew I loved the falsetto and the way he cracked up in "All I Really Wanna Do," and I knew I loved "Spanish Harlem Incident," and I knew that every line in "Chimes of Freedom" was real important, and I knew that "I Shall Be Free #10" and "Motorsycho Nitemare" cracked me up every time. And I knew that "I Don't Believe You" and "It Ain't Me, Babe" sounded a hell of a lot like rock 'n' roll. More Dylan articles were starting to appear and more pictures. And I read each article over and over and the pictures started going up on the walls of my bed room. One time during a trip to Philly, my brother and I saw this huge Dylan poster in Sam Goody's. We asked the salesman where to get it. It turned out the Columbia distribution place was right near my aunt's house. We came home with these big cardboard posters. The New Yorker had a big article on Dylan by Nat Hentoff. It was all about the Another Side session. Dylan talked about how he wasn't going to write "finger-pointing songs" any more.

That October, Dylan played at Philharmonic Hall in New York on Halloween. My parents got me and my brother tickets. It was the end of trick or treating for me. Our seats were in the first row of the balcony, and since the show was sold out, there wasn't any sneaking down to the orchestra this time. I think they cost three bucks. If I wasn't already completely converted, this was the night that did it. I can still remember every song he sang and every thing he said. Bob talked to the audience a lot in those days, and people would shout out stuff and he'd reply. Someone shouted out "Play 'Corrinna Corrinna,'" and he said, "I haven't got my drums." Then someone shouted, "Play 'Mary Had A Little Lamb,'" and he said, "Is that a protest song?" Probably the most famous thing he said that night was "It's Halloween and I've got my Bob Dylan mask on." There were two extra microphones on stage one on each side of Dylan, and I suspected the show was being recorded.

He opened with "Times" and he'd play his guitar real loud into the mic, so it was almost distorting. He was wearing a sports-jacket, a black turtleneck shirt, pressed jeans and desert boots. I'd never seen anyone look so cool. He was wild and funny, and definitely in a good mood and his harp and guitar solos would get almost crazy at times. He did a bunch of old songs, a bunch of songs from Another Side and a bunch of brand new songs. On "Don't Think Twice," he shouted out the last half of each line: "Well it ain't no use to SIT AND WONDER WHY BABE." It was both funny and great. I was mesmerized, I'd never seen anything like it. I couldn't believe what I was seeing and hearing. When he started to play "I Don't Believe You," he kept playing the opening lick over and over again, till he finally cracked "Oh God!," then, "well, here's the second verse of it," but couldn't remember that either. Finally he asked jokingly, "Does anybody know the first line to this song?" Of course, a lot of people shouted it out.

But there were also new songs--in fact in those days one of the reasons you went to Dylan concerts was to hear the new songs--and what songs they were: "If You Gotta Go," "Gates of Eden," (introduced as a sacreligious lullabye in D-minor), "It's All Right Ma," and "Mr. Tambourine Man." Then Dylan brought out Joan Baez and they did another new song "Mama You Been On My Mind," as well as "It Ain't Me, Babe," and "With God On Our Side." Dylan also handed the guitar to Baez and she did "Silver Dagger" and he played harp. He came out alone for the encore, "All I Really Want To Do." The concert was a triumph in every way and the review in the New York Times spoke of his "new maturity." I didn't know it at the time, but I would never see him in concert like that again. I did know that I had to hear "Mr. Tambourine Man" again.

A couple of months later, I was hanging around this record store. I'd made friends with the salesman and he let me go in the back and look at all the promotional material. I came across this album cover slick (the front part). It was Bob Dylan in Concert. It was a great cover. It was a view of Dylan through the spotlight from a balcony. It was all black except for the color phot which was round with the words in white at the top in a half-circle around the photo. It was perfect. I snuck it out the store in a hurry. It was also the first Dylan album not to list the songs on the cover. I figured it had to be the Philharmonic Hall show. I waited and waited for it to come out. I had to hear "Tambourine Man" again. That February Dylan appeared on the Les Crane TV show. He came out and was wearing a suit! He had another guitarist, Bruce Langhorne with him. Langhorne was playing an acoustic, but it had a pick-up. The song was "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" and it didn't sound like folk music. It sounded like rock 'n' roll! (When he played the harp, his eyes would roll to the top of his head. My brother who played harp could imitate it perfectly and I made him do it again and again over the next few weeks.) After "Baby Blue," Dylan sat down chatted with Crane. It was the beginning of the legendary interviews:

Crane: What do you do with all your money Bob?

Dylan: I buy lots of ashtrays, Les.

Crane: What do your friends call you?

Dylan: My friend's call me Robert.

Tommy Sands, at the time Frank Sinatra's son-in-law was also a guest. He took Dylan seriously and called him "Rob" throughout the show. At the end of the show, Dylan did "It's All Right Ma.," with Langhorne backing him. "That's an excellent song," my step-mother said. "He'll make a great rock 'n' roll star," my brother said.